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Criminal Justice & Corrections (Chair)
Select Committee on Community Security
Capital Budget

Report to the 1st District

Spring 2002

Dear Neighbors,

It's over! After 60 long legislative days, we're proud to tell you what was accomplished. The state's dollar-constrained budget presented challenges to funding every state program. We did our best, though it still wasn't enough to satisfy the many programs and needs of the state.

We approved a statewide transportation plan that goes before the voters in November. A separate plan to address the specific transportation needs of our region will also go before the voters this fall or winter.

Some of our other important accomplishments this session include:

- Passing a state budget that trims state services while maintaining our commitment to public education, the social safety net that protects children, families, the elderly and the disabled and funding for local public health districts.
- Approving a measure to increase efficiency and accountability in state and local transportation projects.
- Enhancing the safety of children by expanding efforts to prevent the abandonment of babies, strengthening our foster care system and increasing school safety.
- Increasing public safety by expanding the state's database of DNA from offenders, and reforming our drug sentencing laws to break the cycle of addiction and crime.

Inside we will describe these and other accomplishments in greater detail. We consider it our duty to inform the people of our district about major policy changes enacted by the Legislature that will impact our communities. Please note that in this time of tight state spending we are being extremely careful with all state expenditures, including the production of this newsletter. In order to cut costs we are sending out this joint mailing while we continue to look for other ways to save taxpayers' money.

It has been an honor to have the opportunity to represent you in Olympia. Thank you. Always feel free to contact us about an issue that concerns you.

Sincerely,

Al O'Brien
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Jeanne A. Edwards
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TRANSPORTATION PLANS SENT TO A PUBLIC VOTE

Our first major accomplishment this session was the passage of a transportation efficiencies package which will make transportation planning at the state and local level more efficient and accountable.



The new law:

- Sets measurable performance benchmarks on transportation projects,
- Increases contracting out with the private sector when needs outrun DOT's capacity, and
- Prioritizes the most urgent transportation projects according to safety and traffic volume.

Coupled with important reforms in the areas of permit streamlining and simplifying the design and construction of transportation projects, we have successfully worked with the Department of Transportation to ensure efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness to the public.

Another vital transportation bill we passed this session was a regional plan that focuses on the needs of King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties. This

plan, which will be decided on by voters in these counties, authorizes county council members to draw up a plan to address regional traffic gridlock and develop a revenue proposal to pay for road projects.

The cornerstone of our work in Olympia this year, however, was passage of the proposed 10-year transportation plan that invests \$6.1 billion for congestion relief and road safety on state highways, \$1.2 billion for transportation choices including buses, rail, and passenger-only ferries, and an additional \$330 million for local transportation projects in cities, suburbs and rural communities. The voters will now have the final say on whether to approve this package.

Some of the projects in our area that will be entirely or partially funded by this plan include:

- Additional lanes on I-405 from Lynnwood to Tukwila
- HOV lanes on I-5 from Everett to the Port of Tacoma
- Safety improvements on State Route 522, the "Highway of Death"
- Funding for a new State Route 520 bridge
- Significant improvements on State Route 9
- A new roadway in Mill Creek on State Route 96
- Additional lanes on State Route 527
- A new entrance to UW-Cascadia on State Route 522

Two other measures that we approved to help reduce traffic congestion include:

- The "steer it and clear it" plan to get cars involved in non-injury accidents off the road as quickly as possible. Sixty percent of congestion is caused by stalled cars and traffic accidents. This measure will significantly reduce transportation gridlock.
- A measure to making it quicker for transit authorities to approve vanpool drivers. This will reduce congestion by getting more people into vanpools faster and more cars off of the road.

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Finally, with some extra work by Rep. Edwards, the governor restored \$850,000 of funding to Community Transit and \$200,000 for Everett Transit by partially vetoing a section in the new transportation budget. This action by the governor will enable both of these local transit agencies to continue their efforts to reduce traffic congestion in our community.

A BUDGET FIX THAT PROTECTS HEALTH CARE

As we began budget negotiations this session, it appeared that health care services were headed for devastating cuts. Fortunately, we averted these major cuts by using a balanced approach to filling our \$1.6 billion budget hole.



Because we were concerned that a tax increase would hurt families and possibly inhibit an economic recovery, we focused on trimming state services, borrowing from reserves, using a small portion of our tobacco settlement and eliminating outdated tax exemptions.



We ended up cutting over \$684 million in state services and laying off 945 state employees. This was especially tough at a time of rising enrollments in our K-12 schools and colleges, along with increased prison costs and sharply rising health care expenditures.

We are pleased to have protected both the Children's Health Insurance Program, a program originally sponsored by Rep. Edwards in 1999, and the medically indigent program, a service providing emergency-room care for the uninsured. As a member of the Health Care Committee, Rep. Edwards also worked vigorously to retain funding for local public health districts. We are very pleased to report that this budget keeps \$48.3 million in funding for these frontline agencies that are called on to protect the public not only from the spread of disease, but also from potential terrorist attacks.

As families must do, we tightened our belt during these tough economic times, and refused to raise taxes. We stayed \$431 million below the Initiative 601-imposed spending limit. Most importantly, we succeeded in maintaining our commitment to public education and the social safety net that protects those in need.

ENHANCING CHILD SAFETY

We also passed several important measures that will maintain our children's safety.

SCHOOL SAFETY

To make children safer we passed anti-bullying legislation affecting students in public schools. This effort, in the works for the past five years, garnered strong bipartisan support. The measure requires each school district to adopt a policy prohibiting harassment based on race, religion, disability, or sexual orientation on school grounds and at school activities. All students in Washington state have the right to a safe and supportive school environment free of violence, bullying, intimidation or harassment. This bill ensures that those rights will be protected in our public schools.



IMPROVING FOSTER CARE

We also approved several key reforms to our foster care system that will promote stability for foster children. Many children in short-term foster care are not only uprooted from their families, but also thrust into new schools potentially hurting their academic performance. We developed a measure that requires DSHS to work to build a system that provides educational stability for each child in short-term foster care.



PREVENTING THE ABANDONMENT OF BABIES

In recent years there have been several alarming incidents of newborn babies being abandoned by young parents. These babies have been left in dangerous places such as public bathrooms, trash bins, or sidewalks, placing the infants' lives in considerable danger. To prevent more horrifying incidents like these, the Legislature approved a measure to allow parents to drop unwanted infants off in the safe environments of hospitals or staffed firehouses.

The new law would require the Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) to educate the public, particularly targeting young girls and women with unwanted pregnancies, about this service. It is our hope that this will help prevent some of these extremely sad cases from occurring again in our state. Rep. O'Brien is proud to have championed this bill last year and to have guided it through the legislative process this session.



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BEING TOUGH—AND SMART—ON CRIME

DRUG SENTENCING REFORM

The current approach to dealing with drug crimes is costing taxpayers too much money without solving the problem. To address this issue, we are expanding the use of drug courts statewide.

Drug courts break the cycle of addiction and crime by holding offenders accountable for their crimes *and* their addiction. Using a regimen of treatment, counseling, support groups and regular meetings with supervising judges, drug courts have proven effective at reducing crime. Those offenders who fail to complete the conditions of their drug court sentence face the original sentence of prison time for their crimes.

There are eleven county drug courts now in operation around the state and we are seeing some impressive results. Of all drug court graduates in King County, only 8 percent have re-offended- some of these offenders have been crime-free for as much as five years. The national drug court statistics are excellent as well with only 15 percent of drug court graduates re-offending. Of those drug offenders who do not undergo drug treatment, some 60 percent return to jail.

As a former police officer and the chair of the Criminal Justice & Corrections Committee, Rep. O'Brien would like to thank the coalition of police officers, prosecutors, judges and advocates who helped him work this legislation through with strong bipartisan support.



EXPANDING THE STATE'S DNA DATABASE

Another important measure, signed into law by the governor, will make our state safer by expanding the state crime lab's DNA databank from 3,000 people to more than 25,000. The new law authorizes the expanded use of the latest DNA research technology, an invaluable tool for crime-solving. Under the measure, all persons convicted of felonies as well as the misdemeanors of stalking and harassment, will have their DNA collected. The DNA will be used in the prosecution of serious violent crimes and sex crimes.



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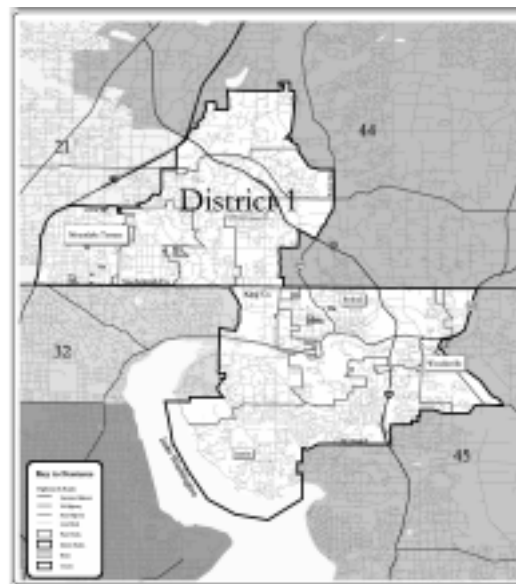


A NOTE ABOUT REDISTRICTING

Due to the recent census and accompanying redistricting process, the 1st Legislative District is changed after this legislative session. On that note, we must say goodbye to some of the communities we have represented in the Legislature. It has been a pleasure to work with and for the citizens of the 1st District. For those who will no longer be part of our district, know that we will continue to advocate for the concerns of all citizens in north King and south Snohomish County.

The new legislative map has changed the 1st District in a major way. The western and southern parts of the district between I-5 and Bothell remain largely the same, however, the eastern part of the district now extends along the Snohomish County line much farther east than before. All of Bothell remains in the district while parts of Mill Creek, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood are added. Unfortunately, much of Kenmore, Woodinville, and Kirkland will no longer be part of the district. Please see the maps at right.

Current 1st District Map



New 1st District Map

